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Royal Ontario Museum. Museum of  
[Zoology]

Historical sketch.



# (Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology

What It Offers and How You Can Help )





## Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology

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# Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology

## HISTORICAL SKETCH

IN October, 1913, the Board of Trustees of the Royal Ontario Museum made provision for the establishment of a division to be devoted to the natural history of animals. In accordance with the constitution of the Royal Ontario Museum, this component is designated "The Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology" and receives its support primarily from the Province of Ontario and the University of Toronto, while the major direction of its work is in charge of the University Department of Biology.

The Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology is in some respects an extension of the University Biological Museum. For about twenty years prior to 1913 the latter museum had been developed as an adjunct to the teaching department of biology. Its collections, carefully selected to illustrate the chief points of animal natural history of various parts of the world, were augmented from time to time as opportunity permitted by anatomical specimens and models. Though relatively a small museum as compared with the many institutions of similar outlook, the Biological Museum earned much favourable comment on account of the methods of display and the value and uniqueness of its specimens.

Owing to the generosity of private donors and collectors, the Biological Museum received many specimens and collections illustrating the general natural history of animal species, in large measure of Canadian animals but to some extent also foreign ones. While, with limited space, these specimens could not be adequately displayed, and, in any case, were, on the whole, less adapted to the purpose of anatomical teaching, they comprised the very best type of material for public exhibition. Consequently, on the establishment of the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology, the nucleus of its present collection was formed by transfer from the Biological Museum. In the installation of the new collection some discrimination was again necessary on account of limitations of space, preference being given to Canadian animals, of which several thousand specimens were available, and to specimens especially designated by donors to be the property of the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology.

In its future development the museum will become representative of natural history of all parts of the world. Many specimens of foreign species have been for a long time available, while within the last few years many others have been presented. Indeed, the aspect of the exhibition collection is gradually changing from

year to year due to the influx of foreign material. Up to the present, however, the exhibition gallery has been developed, for the reasons stated, chiefly as a Canadian collection. While there is undoubtedly a breadth of education to be derived from a study of the animals of foreign countries because of their less familiar aspect, and while the personal interest in them is for the same reason greater, it is believed that the display of native animals is, or should be, an essential part of the education of our citizens; then, too, visitors from abroad are naturally most interested in the native animals. Thus the present collection illustrates in the main the following features:

- (1) An exhibition collection illustrating the various species of Canadian animals, with special reference to those of Ontario.

- (2) A series of habitat groups illustrating native animals in carefully elaborated replicas of their natural environments.

- (3) A selected series illustrating the chief peculiarities of form, coloration, and life history of insects, and the natural history of Canadian insects; including a subsidiary collection of the commonest, together with a complete demonstration of the methods of collecting and mounting.

- (4) A special collection illustrating the injurious insects of farm, orchard, park, and forest, with examples of their work.

- (5) A series of coloured casts of Canadian fishes, especially those significant in game and commercial fisheries. This series is being prepared at great expense of time and effort and is already one of the outstanding features of the collection.

- (6) A study collection of animals, not used for exhibition, but available at all times to students of natural history, artists, and others.

Efforts are being made to bring together collections illustrating the natural history of Dominion and Provincial Park areas, animals important in Canadian industries, and a series of photographs, prints, and paintings of native animals.

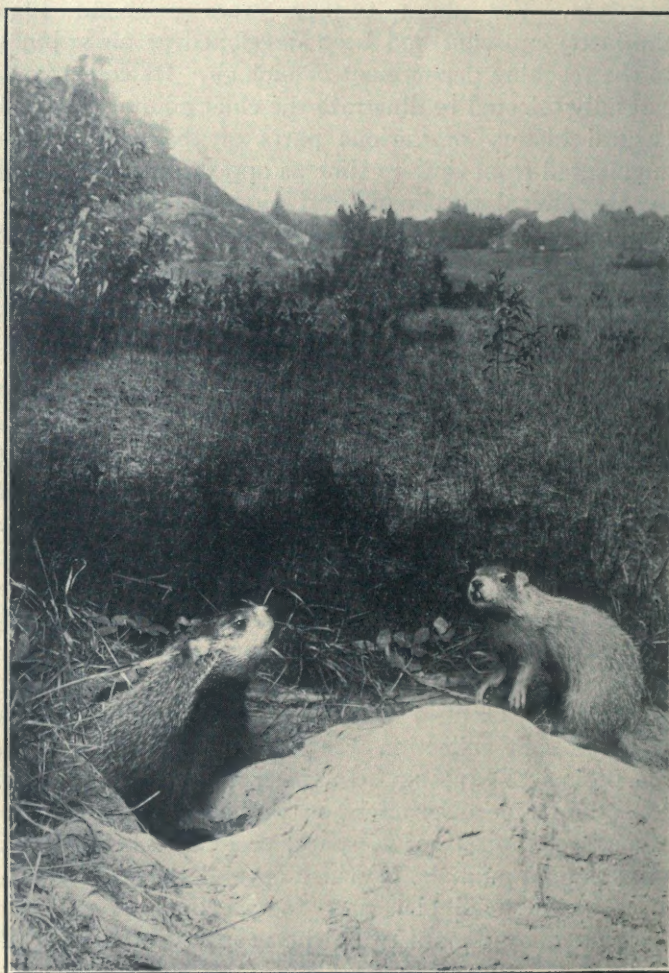
### How the Museum Obtains Its Specimens

There is a widespread notion that, since the Museum is supported directly or indirectly by the Province its specimens are similarly provided. While particularly desirable specimens are sometimes obtained in this way, it is the exception rather than the rule that the collec-





*White-throated Sparrow  
and Marmot*



*Two of the habitat group  
mounts*



## ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY

tions are augmented by direct purchase. Indeed, it should be borne in mind, first, that the Province is already at great expense for maintenance charges in addition to capital expenditure; second, that the institution is practically free to all alike; and, third, that the directional service is provided free of charge to the Museum. A museum, in fact, must be regarded as a public repository, and not even the large museums of the world have attained their present eminence on any other basis. Though there are many instances in which specimens and whole collections, through one circumstance or another, have to be handled in a commercial way, the chief consideration for the prospective donor or collector is whether he wishes to keep his specimens for his individual enjoyment, to count them a commercial asset, or to enjoy the satisfaction of having them cared for in perpetuity, shared with the public, and publicly acknowledged.

There is also a current idea that specimens and collections may be obtained whenever wanted or when funds are available for purchase. While it is true that many kinds of specimens are in the hands of dealers and are regularly offered for sale, it will be evident to

anyone who examines a zoological collection at all critically that the majority of specimens are such as have had a large amount of time spent on their preparation. All collections which are worth while represent a very great deal of effort and, in most cases, if the facts were known, a life-time of effort, on the part of some enthusiast. Opportunity may in this case knock more than once, but it is unwise to wait; the best collections are not to be duplicated, and money cannot buy what is not again offered. Furthermore, the supplies of animals are yearly becoming smaller. It is perhaps not generally known that the advance of civilization and industrial effort in various parts of the world, on land and in the water, is bringing about a depletion of animal life, the reports of which in numbers of skins, tonnage, etc., are appalling.

On the other hand, important collections, in many cases notwithstanding appreciation of the public interest on the part of their owners, now and then have to be placed on the market. The Museum is frequently interested in their purchase and perhaps almost as frequently does not possess the necessary funds. It is not simply that the Museum fails to obtain these



A GENERAL VIEW OF THE EAST GALLERY



specimens. The fact should be generally known that many owners of specimens who can ill afford to give them away either finally consent to deposit them with the Museum or sell at a very nominal figure rather than have their specimens go elsewhere,—a kind of loyalty which, it will be agreed, should not go unrecognized.

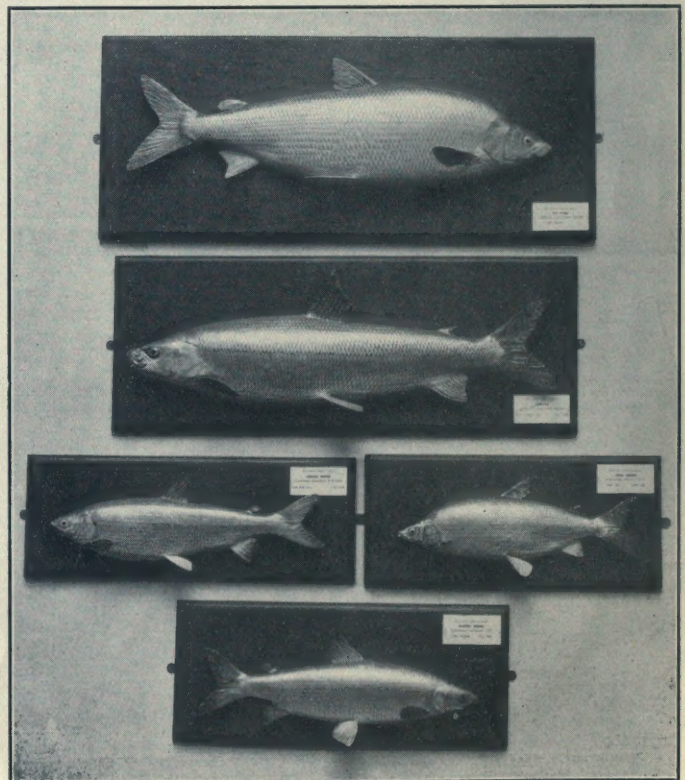
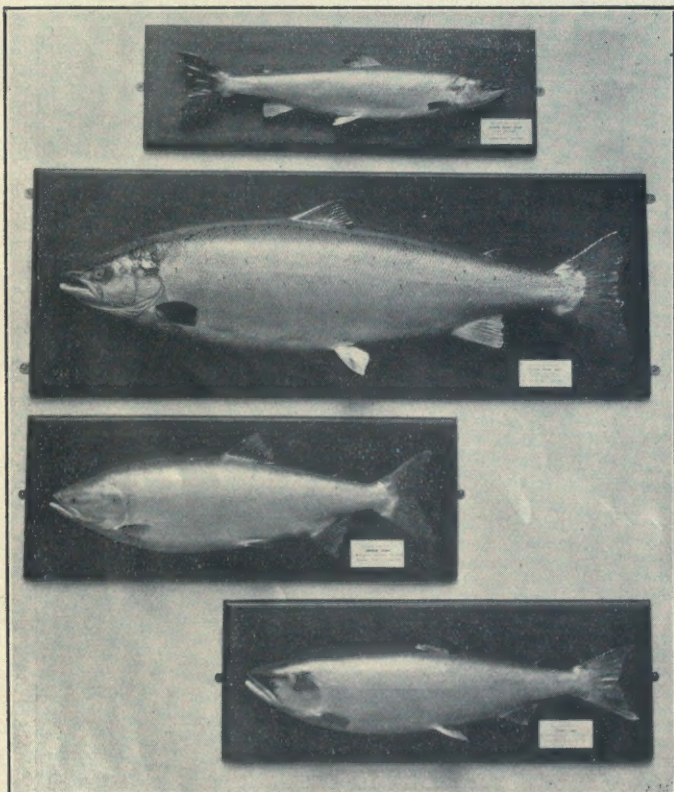
### What Kinds of Specimens Are Desirable?

While it is generally understood that the purpose of a zoological museum is to collect, classify, and exhibit animals, the character of desirable specimens is often not appreciated. Among the erroneous ideas commonly met with is that the most desirable are those which are unusual in the sense of being aberrant, monstrosities, or freaks. This misconception, for which the barking showman of circus days is at least partly responsible, is quite opposed to the underlying conception of a scientifically founded museum. The study of nature, the basis of natural history interest and observational knowledge, is the study of the normal. To one who knows nature it is the normal which reflects its order. Larger, more beautifully coloured, or better prepared specimens may be unusual but are not abnormal. Extremes of physical variation such as would ordinarily be called freaks or monstrosities, though less significant to a natural history museum, are frequently of great

interest from an anatomical and embryological standpoint, and therefore should be preserved. But in the long run it is the naturally occurring normal animal which is most desirable from the standpoint of a natural history museum, and which offers the truest representation of nature in the matter of public education.

### The Museum and Conservation

Observation of the public attitude towards zoological museums and museum specimens reveals an astonishing diversity of view. With some individuals the natural tendency is towards indiscriminate collection without regard to the principles of conservation and, in some cases at least, without appreciation of the necessity of restrictive measures on the part of government authorities. While a zoological museum is interested in offering as much as possible in the way of representative specimens, both to the public through its exhibition galleries and to the student through its research collections, it is not interested in the process of simply killing more animals nor in increasing its collections for the sake of having more specimens. In Canada we have protective measures, such as the international Migratory Birds Convention Act and the game laws of the various provinces, which are designed not to hinder study but to provide protection for native animals for our own enjoyment and for the sake of posterity. In many,



SALMON AND WHITEFISH—A GROUP OF COLOURED CASTS OF GAME AND FOOD FISHES.



perhaps too many, cases there are no restrictions but where such restrictions exist it is still possible to obtain specimens under authority and subject to proper consideration of the public welfare.

## The Museum and Education

At the other extreme there is the relatively more wholesome sentiment of those who dislike dead specimens in a museum because they have a real appreciation of the life of animals in their native surroundings. For the lover of birds there is no substitute for the green fields, woods, and marshes, for the field glass and the camera. But to whom is the privilege available, summer and winter, at home and abroad, and how are animals identified? Each year the Museum is visited by over one hundred thousand persons, of whom a large proportion are children, including about seven thousand in organized school classes. The instinctive love of children for animals is, fortunately, proof against the efforts of unthinking individuals to stifle it. In actual observation of children it is rare to find any repugnance or even careless indifference to the mounted specimen as opposed to the living animal. If children discriminate at all, it is probable that they are relatively more impressed with the ease of viewing the animal under conditions where it is readily observed as opposed to their recollection of animals seen under difficulties in nature. Chiefly, however, it is only in the Museum that a great variety of animals can be brought under observation at any time of the year. Children can study not only the native animals but also foreign ones which, under the best conditions, could not be seen alive without recourse to zoological gardens or trips abroad. They can identify species of native animals which perhaps have been seen in nature, either the commonest ones such as usually form the basis of nature study instruction or, if interested, representatives of almost all. Finally, it should be remembered that there is a large and ever-increasing portion of our population whose lives, to say the least, do not lead them into the by-ways of nature,—individuals who, for example, can see, on any day of the year, replicas of northern scenery but to whom the boasted Highlands of Ontario are a closed book. And there are still less fortunate dwellers in the brick and mortar environment of a large city who,

except for the occasional intervention of charity, never see the wonders of nature at all. It may be that in some respects a museum is a poor substitute for nature itself, but it has rightfully come to be a very vital factor in the entertainment and education of the people.

## Public Co-operation

For the development of the zoological collections the Museum desires the assistance of the public in any of the following ways:

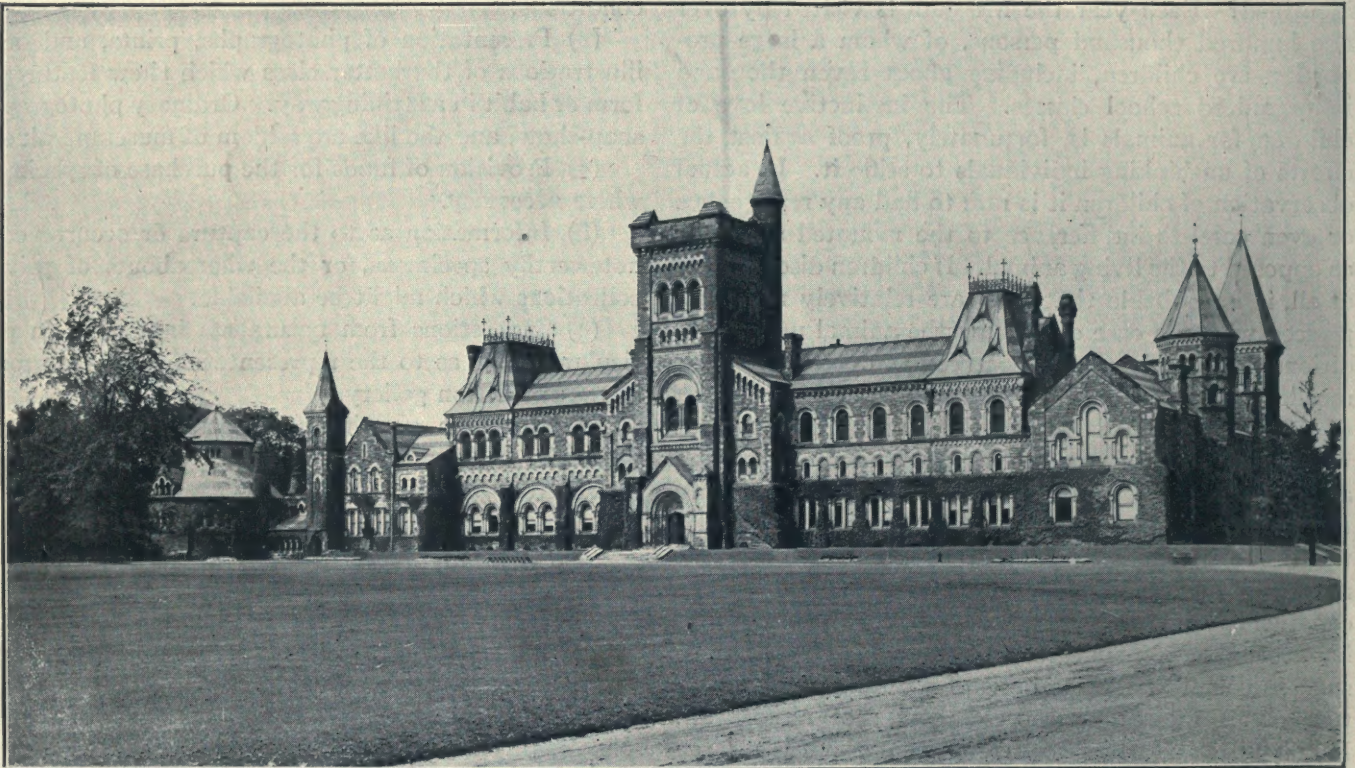
- (1) Presentation of specimens and collections of animals, living, mounted, or unmounted, and of anatomical parts; examples of the work of animals.
- (2) Presentation of specimens showing unusual conditions.
- (3) Presentation of photographs, prints, and other illustrations of the better class which show features of form or habit in a striking way. Ordinary photographs, snap-shots, and the like are seldom of museum value.
- (4) Provision of funds for the purchase of specimens where necessary.
- (5) Information as to the capture or occurrence of noteworthy specimens, or the whereabouts of private collections which might be available.
- (6) Suggestions from naturalists interested in particular groups as to the representation of these groups in the exhibition gallery.
- (7) Donation of animals or parts important in the industries and such gear, or models of it, as would be instructive.

## Some Activities of the Museum

The Museum regularly maintains a technical staff for casting, modelling, painting, and taxidermy; sends out field parties in conjunction with the University staff for obtaining material; conducts instruction for schools, private classes, and interested groups of individuals; loans lantern slides and projection apparatus to teachers and others for instructional purposes; where possible, loans or otherwise furnishes specimens to institutions desiring them. The study collections, including many thousand specimens, in most cases well-classified, are accessible to all interested, on application.







UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

*This bulletin is the third of a series issued during the present academic year by the Provincial University; others will be published from time to time. These publications are sent out free on request and copies of earlier bulletins will be supplied so far as they are available. Apply to the Director of University Extension, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario.*